

# The conundrum of professionalising building surveying in Malaysia

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**Purpose:** To track the series of failed attempts by a few like-minded persons since the early 1980s to entrench building surveying as a profession in Malaysia.

**Design/ methodology/approach:** Data were sourced from elite interviews with authoritative individuals who have been championing building surveying as a profession and supplemented by secondary sources.

**Findings:** Established professional bodies became hostile to what they perceived as attempts to encroach into their professional jurisdictions. There was even a move to subjugate building surveyors to auxiliary role. The ultimate aim to obtain statutory 'ring fence' around the proposed building surveying profession did not find favour with lawmakers.

**Practical implications:** Late-comers face an uphill challenge in negotiating for legitimacy from established professions and lawmakers alike in a situation when no new work demand avails. Building surveyors in Malaysia either wait for external changes which would allow their traditional role to be formally recognised, or take up new specialisations.

**Originality/ value:** New empirical findings were uncovered. The main contribution lies in demonstrating the applicability of the various sociological perspectives for studies on professions in the construction industry.

**Keywords:** Inter-professional struggle, legislation legitimacy, elite interviews, Malaysia, ring fence.

## 1. Introduction

It was Jolley (1989) who pointed out that the twentieth century was the century professions and professionals proliferated. Great occupations vie to be regarded as professions, the prize being recognition, social prestige and economic rewards (Bilton et al., 1987). The main objective of the professions should be positive functions of servicing and protecting the public above personal gains (Bollom, 1988; Murray and Zentner, 1989). Clearly there is nothing wrong with making a lot of money if the professionals do what they are licensed to do; and that is to be trustworthy in offering quality service (Moorhead et al., 2003). To uphold the public's trust, the profession regulates the members' competence and ethics. However for some time now, society has become more critical of professional altruism claims as a veiled quest for elitism, status, power, high

income and restrictive protectionism (McGhee, 1995; Saks, 2018). Given that so much is at stake, it is no surprise that inter-professional conflicts occur over jurisdiction or scopes of practice (Abbott, 1988).

This paper tracks the inter-professional struggle that began in the early 1980s by a few like-minded persons to introduce the building surveying as a profession in Malaysia against established professions which perceived this act as an encroachment upon already occupied territories. It then seeks to identify the stumbling blocks that have prevented building surveying from attaining professional recognition. There have been related publications which have dwelled on the merits of having the building surveying profession in Malaysia. But they have been mainly written by the very people who want to circumscribe building surveying as a distinct professional identity, and therefore may have been biased. Also the struggles of the pioneers in exploring every opportunity for legitimacy have been largely overlooked.

In sociological literature on professions, there are three major perspectives – professionalisation theory (Etzioni, 1969; Ritzer, 1977; Quinn, 2018), professional power theory (Brown 1973; Freidson, 1970; Correia, 2017), and professional systems model (Abbott, 1988; Bos-de Vos et al., 2019; Trotter, 2019) - which attempt to explain the quest for professional control. This paper evaluates the theoretical claims by referring to the findings of this current research.

Inter-professional conflicts, have been mainly studied in the context of the medical (Halpern, 1992; Dahle, 2003), accounting (O'Regan, 2001; Caramis, 2004) and legal (Abbott, 1988; Walker, 2004) domains. Empirical findings aside, the contribution of this paper lies in pushing the theoretical debate to include construction.

## **2.0 Conflicts between occupational groups**

Research works on clashes between occupational groups for professional status which started in the 1970s started to lose its allure three decades later. Lately, researches on inter-professional conflict have centred on conflict management (Lee et al., 2014; Merrill and Miller, 2015; Gurău, 2017) and teamwork (Reeves et al, 2011, Muller-Juge et al., 2014; Tomizawa et al., 2017). This section reverts to the original discussions on claims of occupational groups for professional status.

Inter-professional conflict commonly occurs in the health care system. In Norway for example, there was a long and intense conflict between nurses and nursing assistants over professional expertise (Dahle, 2003). The former felt threatened by the mere presence of the latter and the overlapping work they did. They made extensive use of rather militant exclusionary closure strategies towards nursing assistants to deny them professional status. A more recent study found that work-related activities of nursing assistants in Norwegian care homes are like that of nurses, even though the former should have been assigned to lower care levels (Edda and Fagerström, 2010). Exclusionary closure strategies try to keep others from entering the profession in order to preserve status and maintain privileges (Witz, 1992). Indeed, Johnson (1987) asserted that such strategies are one of the cornerstones exercised by professional groups and constitute a major step towards professionalisation. The nurses made knowledge claims as the single most important boundary demarcation. Nursing assistants were trained at secondary high school level whereas nurses in colleges and even universities. Nursing assistants elsewhere also experience the same fate; in the US, the career ladder for nurse assistants is limited (Scrimgeour, 2015). In Korea, though the Medical Service Act (2015) distinguished clearly the scope of practice between registered nurses and nurse assistants, their roles for nurses in the community remains ambiguous (Choi et al., 2019).

In Ontario, Canada, inter-professional conflict erupted between dentists and dental hygienists (Adams, 2004). The former had long been subordinated to the latter. The conflict in oral care service was prompted by a combination of changes in regulations, market and the desire of both

sides to expand their social status and privileges. Still Canadian dental hygienists aspired to branch out beyond their supporting role to dentists (Framer et al., 2017). To become key change agents, the proposed actions include curriculum expansion or integration, incorporation of dental hygienists in managerial roles, increasing inter-professional collaboration, and increasing public awareness. Already in the US, it was found that broader scope of practice for dental hygienists improves oral health outcomes (Langelier et al., 2016).

The contest for professional status also played out in the financial sector. Suddaby and Greenwood (2001) described how the then Big Five accounting firms (i.e. PricewaterhouseCoopers, Ernst & Young, Deloitte Touche, Arthur Andersen and KPMG) expanded their knowledge space from auditing to management consulting, and most controversially into the legal profession, a phenomenon termed as colonisation (Abbott, 1988). The firms even targeted universities by directly or indirectly migrating into the field of management education and research. When the Big Five sought to extend their jurisdiction to include internal audit service, they clashed with the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), and Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) (Covalski et al., 2003). Meanwhile, internal auditors through their organisation, the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), failed to obtain legal recognition, both in the US and globally (O'Regan, 2001). This is despite establishing the paraphernalia of a formal professional framework which included the setting up of the IIA itself, enhancing the theory and practice of the discipline as a defined body of examined and certified knowledge, providing sophisticated literature (including serials and periodicals), conducting research activities, preparing written standards and laying down a code of ethics. By 2017, the Big Four (in 2002 Arthur Andersen surrendered its licence in the wake of Enron, WorldCom and Waste Management scandals) dominated accounting and audit services, among others, not only in the US, but also around the globe (Gow and Kells, 2018).

The Bankruptcy Act of 1869 unleashed inter-professional competition between accountants and lawyers in Victorian England and Wales which unfolded in professional media (Walker, 2004). For daily operations, the two professions maintained mutual dependency rather than conflict. Despite some semblance of jurisdictional settlement in the 1870s and 1880s, competition for insolvency work extended into the 20th century. In the mid-1980s the British government toyed with the idea of transferring almost entirely state-funded legal advice functions from solicitors to lay advisers. Moorhead et al. (2003) evaluated this proposal and concluded that it was possible for non-lawyer agencies to perform on par or better quality service than lawyers. They observed, "The control of entry into legal practice, years of legal education, and regulation of conduct and competence have done little or nothing to distinguish the lawyers from their non-lawyer competitors" (p. 795). Wilkins and Ferrer (2018) predicted that accountancy networks with globally integrated multidisciplinary practices will be even more successful in penetrating the corporate legal services market as that market increasingly matures in a direction that favours the integration of law into a wider category of business solutions.

### **3.0 Building surveying in the UK, Hong Kong and Australia**

Before moving on to the next section, it is instructive to examine the building surveying profession in the UK where it originated from, as well as in Hong Kong and Australia where it well received. Generally, building surveying has yet to attain worldwide presence, unlike quantity surveying and property surveying (Wilkinson and Russell, 2005; Hannah et al., 2009). The uphill struggle to get building surveying recognised in Malaysia should be viewed in this context.

Compared to say, quantity surveying, building surveying is a relatively new profession. It only emerged in the UK during the 1970s (Kibblewhite and Wilkinson, 2004). A group of technically minded general practitioners morphed their professional skills and knowledge in the area of repairs, refurbishment, maintenance and extension of properties which other consultants refrain

from (Isnin et al., 2016). The website belonging to the Building Surveying Division of Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors explains that it was established in 1985, beginning with 119 members. Today, membership stands at nearly 1,500. Building surveyors in Hong Kong perform the same duties as their counterparts in the UK such as building maintenance and rehabilitation works (Wong et al., 2007). They also undertake facilities management which the Hong Kong Chapter of the International Facilities Management Association wanted jurisdiction over (Lomas, 1999). For their part, tertiary education institutions such as the Hong Kong Polytechnic University churn out graduates to fill up the job vacancies (Wong et al., 2007). Over in Australia, building surveyors are akin to building control surveyors in the UK (Zillante and Wilkinson, 2006; Maund et al., 2013). There is a severe national shortage of building surveyors in Australia from which certifiers are drawn due to a combination of factors – under-publicity of the profession, media accounts putting certifiers in poor light, complex and inconsistent accreditation, unclear pathways resulting in low university enrolment, and difficulty in upskilling to achieve higher levels of accreditation (Maund et al., 2013).

#### 4.0 Research method

This research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is rooted in interpretivism (Chandra and Shang, 2019). Interpretivism views reality subjectively as social construct and researchers aim to understand the meanings from human actions (Schwandt, 2003). The study was approached from a phenomenologically driven longitudinal perspective; ‘phenomenologically’ as it derived the ‘meaning’ of the phenomenon by interviewing a small group of people (Paley, 2016) and ‘longitudinal’ as it explored attitudes to the profession over time (Neale, 2018). Two data collection tools were relied upon: elite semi-structured interviews and literature review.

This study adopted purposeful elite sampling. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), elite sampling targets individuals who are considered influential, prominent and well-informed. Elite survey is commonly used in political science and political sociology (Lopez, 2013), though it has been used in other disciplines to probe sensitive topics such as infidelity (Moore, 2010), corruption (Acar, 2016), sexual orientation (Case et al., 2005) and student activism (Cole, 2014). When the elicited dynamic qualities of a phenomenon are dependent on the reliance of words, not numbers, small sample size is immaterial (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006). The strength of elite interviews is that the elites can “shed light on the hidden elements” (Tansey, 2007, p.767) of the subject matter. As the information sought was only available from a small circle of people who have been campaigning for the building surveying profession in Malaysia, elite sampling provided the only means to obtain reliable insight.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at two different points in time, the first in 2005 and the second in 2018. The first occasion involved two strong proponents of the building surveying profession. Both were lecturers of two different universities. One was an office bearer of the Building Surveying Section, the Royal Institution of Surveyors Malaysia (RISM), while the other was an ordinary member of the same section. The findings were documented in an unpublished report (Chak, 2005). The second occasion involved four persons. The first was the same person who was then an office bearer of the Building Surveying Section but had since vacated the position. The second and third persons were long-time office bearers of the RISM. The final interviewee, like the first, actively promoted the profession from the 1990s and was on the verge of retirement. All these people were either directly involved in attempts to reshape the surveying profession in Malaysia or followed those attempts closely as part of their job. The early champions of building surveying were limited to a small group of people which has been steadily shrinking as members retire, thereby putting urgency to the documentation of their struggles and contributions.

The purpose of the interviews was to reconstruct ‘what’ happened and ‘why’ (Silverman, 2013). Apart from a few guided questions, the interviews were unstructured so that the research subject could be explored in-depth from the respondents’ perspective (Cresswell, 2007). Patton (2001) advises that for this sampling technique, prior exploratory work is required to identify these persons. As with Case et al. (2005) and Cole (2014), the initial elite respondent, an acquaintance of one of the authors, provided contact details of rest of the elites. No direct reference is made to any of them in the findings section in order to maintain anonymity.

Following Gorbacheva and Sovacool (2015), the small interview sample was compensated with a comprehensive literature review. In all, 23 documents were compiled and the most relevant cited in the Finding section. Most of the publications were produced by building surveyors themselves and had to be read in that light. The combination of interview and literature review data collection approaches was also adopted by other inter-professional conflict studies such as Moorhead et al., (2003) and Adams (2004).

## 5.0 Findings

Building surveying (BS) was introduced in pre-independence Malaya in the 1950s by the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council (KLMC) (Ramly (2003). The first building surveyor was Mr. G. K. Warrens, a British citizen. Other local authorities such as Petaling Jaya City Council (PJCC), Bentong Municipal Council (BMC) and Subang Jaya Municipal Council followed suit (SJMC). Four decades later, proper efforts to professionalise the discipline began with the institutionalisation of the building surveying practice.

In 1990, 18 members of the Institution of Surveyors Malaysia (ISM) successfully lobbied for the formation of the fourth section, namely the Building Surveying Section, as part of their effort to claim for professional status (Dickinson, 1999). The interviewees revealed that the inspiration to lobby initially came from those working at Kuala Lumpur City Hall. They then rallied others to join in. These early promoters of building surveying emulated the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) of the US (O’Regan, 2001) by establishing a comprehensive formal professional framework in their quest for professionalism.

Formed in 1961 to give surveying a local identity, the ISM represents the surveying profession in Malaysia. In 2011 the organisation was renamed Royal Institution of Surveyors Malaysia, RISM, when the sultan of one of the states conferred it the royal status. The three sections which form the cornerstones prior to the Building Surveying Section are Geomatic and Land surveying (GLS), Quantity Surveying (QS) and Property Consultancy and Valuation Surveying (PCVS).

The next step was for building surveying to attain academic legitimacy in Malaysia. Universities provide credentials that vouch for graduates’ mastery of a set of knowledge and skills (Leicht, 2018). A few of the pioneers who championed for the professionalisation of building surveying were academics. They succeeded in getting their respective universities –Universiti Teknologi MARA (1994), Universiti Malaya (1996) and Universiti Sains Malaysia (2009) - to offer undergraduate building surveying programmes. One private university, Twintech International University College of Technology followed suit in 2015, followed by University of Reading’s Malaysia in 2017. The respondents intimated that the proposal to offer the programmes were questioned by some of the faculty members notably at Universiti Teknologi MARA and Universiti Sains Malaysia over concerns about the discipline’s absence of professional status. By providing training through the university system, the founders of the programmes aimed to create an effective exclusionary closure strategy (Witz, 1992). This move augured well with the precept that members of a certain profession possess a higher education qualification and are identified more for their educational status rather than for particular occupational skills (Freidson, 1983).

Indeed, Ramly (2003) claimed that the building surveying undergraduate syllabus met 100% of building surveying work function. Shah Ali and Chen (2012) asserted that undergraduate building surveying programmes prepare students to ensure all building control regulations are complied with during the planning and construction works for all kinds of building projects, new and old. Meanwhile, the promoters of building surveying went on a publicity campaign through ISM's inhouse magazine (e.g. Hashim, 1993; Hashim, 1994; Syed Yusoff, 1997; Dickinson, 1999; Ahmad, 2000) as well as newspapers (Othuman Mydin, 2014).

Registration allows occupational control over who can or cannot practice the profession (Philipsen, 2009). Despite establishing the fourth division within RISM, the Building Surveying Section cannot enforce entry control, ethical codes, constant surveillance and disciplinary actions including deregistration unlike the Board of Land Surveyors Malaysia (BLSM), Board of Quantity Surveyors Malaysia (BQSM), and Board of Valuers, Appraisers and Estate Agents Malaysia (BOVEA). This is because the discipline lacks statutory sanction. Hence, focus was then to construct the building surveying professional identity through legislation.

The Surveyors Act 1967 was revised in 1972, 1973, 1974 and 1989, yet each time it happened, building surveying was never incorporated (Ramly, 2003). One interviewee described the “torturous experience” of trying to convince government ministries, ministers, deputy prime minister and even the prime minister to get the proposed Building Surveying Act legislated (see Table 1). Even university support proved ineffective. According to Shah Ali and Chen (2012), the proposed Act was mentioned in Parliament with no effect. Undeterred by the set-back to ring fence the discipline through legislation, online search found that on the 9th December 2009, three members of the Building Surveying Section made an official visit to the Bar Council seeking their assistance in getting the proposed Act legislated (The Malaysian Bar, 2011). The visitors made clear about the overlapping jurisdiction of building surveyors, architects and engineers. Five years on in 2016, the Chairman of the Building Surveying Division lamented about the challenges building surveyors still faced (Mohd Din, 2016).

| Year      | Event   |
|-----------|---|
| 1994      | ISM requested a dialogue with Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG) regarding the proposed Act.   |
| 1996-1999 | ISM held discussions with MHLG and Ministry of Public Works (MPW).  |
| 2000      | The Minister of Public Works agreed to support the proposed Building Surveying Act in the Cabinet meeting.  |
| 2001-2003 | In August 2001, MPW withdrew its support and advised ISM to revert to MHLG. On the 11 <sup>th</sup> November 2003, a memorandum and document relating to the application for the approval of the Act were submitted to the Director General of Local Government Department, MHLG.   |
| 2006      | In May 2006, ISM's proposal was raised with the MPW but was turned down once again. MPW reiterated that the proposal be handled by MHLG.<br>On the 23rd August 2006, the Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Malaya wrote a letter to the Deputy Prime Minister regarding the proposed Act, citing the number of building surveying graduates that local universities had already produced.<br>On the 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2006, the Cabinet suggested that the Architect Act 1967 be amended to incorporate the building surveying profession. |

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 2007 | A few Vice-Chancellors and ISM met the Deputy Prime Minister.<br>On 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2007, the proposed Act was raised in the Cabinet meeting. It was agreed that MPW hold discussions with key stakeholders regarding the matter.<br>On the 25 <sup>th</sup> July 2007, the Cabinet assigned MPW to oversee the proposal for building surveyors to have their own Act. ISM helped draft the Act. |
| 2009 | ISM wrote a letter to the Prime Minister urging for the realisation of the Act.  |

Table 1: Chronology of events to get the Building Surveying Act legislated.

Source: Interviews

As a comparison, legislating the other surveying disciplines was relatively smooth-sailing. The Land Surveyors Act was legislated in 1958, a year after Malaya gained independence from Great Britain. The Quantity Surveyors Act was passed by Parliament in 1967 together with the Surveyor Act. The Valuers, Appraisers, Estate Agents and Property Managers Act which regulates the General Practice Surveying, technically referred to as PCVS, was legislated in 1981.

Tension emerged between the people who wanted to introduce a new specialty in surveying and various key stakeholder who regarded it as occupational boundary infringement despite denial by the former (Shah Ali and Chen, 2012). This conflict was played out in the sequence of events shown in Table 1. The MPW withdrew its support in 2001 following pressure from professional architects and engineers. One respondent intimated that when the Cabinet proposed in 2006 for the amendments of the Architect Act 1967 to include building surveying, the Board of Architects convened an immediate meeting with the Building Surveying Division of ISM 16 days later for jurisdiction settlement. The outcome of that meeting was that, not only were the building surveyors denied exclusive scope of practice, it was suggested they become subordinates to the architects and engineers. A year later when the Cabinet requested for MPW to hold discussions with key stakeholders, the Board of Architects Malaysia and Board of Engineers Malaysia together with ISM met and circumscribed the work of building surveyors to cover building control: maintenance and conservation of building, and risk management and building audit.

Once this scope of practice was articulated, other stakeholders - the Malaysian Institute of Architects, Association of Consulting Engineers, Real Estate and Housing Developers Association (representing major developers in Malaysia), and Master Builders Association Malaysia (representing major contractors in Malaysia) - expressed their protest in a referendum. In response, on the 7th November 2007, deans of built environment faculties from various universities met and wrote a letter to the Ministry of Higher Education affirming their support for the Act.

Malaysian law-makers kept a neutral stance, preferring instead to let the industry players sort themselves out. New specialty can only emerge if established segments are willing to acknowledge it as a distinct professional jurisdiction. (Halpern, 1992). Despite negotiations over a span of two decades, the promoters of the building surveying profession failed to win any concessions over legal jurisdiction from established professional bodies.

This jurisdictional tension actually stretched even further back to the developmental stage of surveying in post-independence Malaysia, revealed the interviewees. When the Surveyor Act was passed by Parliament in 1967, building surveying was positioned under the PCVS. When the Surveyor Act 1967 was revised in 1972 (and in subsequent years), building surveying was not mentioned because the custodians of PCVS insisted that a separate Act be legislated for this surveying stream. By that time, many of the members of the PCVS section within ISM were already providing services traditionally associated with building surveying (Dickinson, 1999).

The interviewees pointed to one notable consolation, which was the recognition of building surveyors by the Public Services Department (PSD). In 1996, PSD classified building surveying

graduates as J3 professionals, which is the same status as architectural and engineering graduates. In 2000, PSD introduced a building surveying scheme - Grade J54. Two years later it refined the scheme with the additional of Grades J41, J44, J48 and J52. Building surveying technical assistants fall under the Grades J29, J36 and J38 scheme. On the 12th of June 2007, the Minister of Works announced the establishment of a building surveying section and central maintenance unit in the Public Works Department (PWD) (Berita Harian, 2007a; Berita Harian 2007b). According to one interviewee, a year later PWD started recruiting building surveyors.

Even so, the promoters of building surveying admitted that only a few building surveying graduates were employed in Malaysian government departments (Abd-Rashid and Ishak, 2007). Until today, the private sector has yet to fully embrace this new profession. Most graduates work in other fields such as property management, quantity surveying and site management (Ali and Woon, 2013; Isnin et al., 2016). Consequently building surveying graduates do not register themselves with the Building Surveying Division of RISM. Without their support, it is difficult to make the public, government and private sector in treating building surveying seriously (Shah Ali and Chen, 2012). These graduates would only align themselves with the division if there is a clear connection between membership and delivery of career goals and opportunities for advancement (Wilkinson and Reed, 2010).

## 6.0 Discussion

In this section, the inter-professional conflict which unfolded in over the past few decades involving parties to the construction industry in Malaysia is contrasted with three streams of literature on professions.

Professionalisation theory posits that inimical socio-economic status, gender or insufficiently complex body of knowledge can hinder the quest for full professional status (Etzioni, 1969; Ritzer, 1977; Losavio et al., 2016; Quinn, 2018). The study found that of all these possibilities, lack of specialised knowledge provides the most powerful explanatory power. The fact that other professional members are capable of carrying out building surveying duties (Abd-Rashid and Ishak, 2007) cast aspersions on the knowledge argument that only university graduates from building surveying have exclusive ownership over specialised theoretical and practical knowledge. Moreover, the building surveying store of knowledge apparently is not profoundly different from other closely allied undergraduate programmes, since building surveying graduates can encroach into construction management and building management jurisdictions (Amin Shah and Chen, 2012). In the UK too, the building surveying syllabus is “so broad that building surveyors have little knowledge about too many areas and limited depth of knowledge” (Kibblewhit and Wilkinson, 2004). However the profession in the UK managed to successfully manoeuvre themselves into niche markets that require specialised skills. The findings lend support to the professionalisation theory.

The professional power theory associates the dominant profession with the influence it has over the competing segment's occupational structures which encompass professional association, training programmes, accreditation bodies, certification systems (Brown 1973; Freidson, 1970; Carvalho and Santiago, 2016; Correia, 2017). The predictive power of this theory does not avail in the context of the study. As described before, firstly there was not one but several professions and occupational groups that were against the building surveying professional standing. Secondly, none of these groups influenced in any way the occupational structure of building surveying.

The professional systems model proposed by Abbott (1988) and borrowed by others (e.g. Bos-de Vos et al., 2019; Trotter, 2019) is dynamic in that inter-professional conflict always exists as professions compete for jurisdiction. This is true in the case of the building surveying movement which has been running for decades, ever since the formative years of the surveying practice.



Overt resistance initially by the PCVS broadened to include professional architects and engineers, and finally developers and contractors, which only became apparent with the unwaning persistence of building surveyors. The model predicts that claims for jurisdiction can be obtained in one of three ways: state regulations, public image and workers in the workplace. These three methods are discussed here. Despite several amendments to the draft of the Building Surveying Act to appease other established professions, endorsement remains elusive. It is a reflection of the power and influence existing professional bodies and trade organisations wield over the government that approval for a new fully autonomous profession was denied. What the proponents of building surveying have circumscribed in 2007 together with the Board of Architects Malaysia and Board of Engineers Malaysia are work practices that overlap with those of established professions. They have not been able to identify a niche service that is above and beyond what is already in the market. Without exclusivity, full professional status is hard to justify. Building surveying must share its claimed jurisdiction with other professional disciplines. If the architects and engineers have their way, building surveyors would be relegated as their subordinates. The situation in Malaysia contrasts that in the UK where the architects willingly relinquished the task of supervising and managing repairs and refurbishment of properties for the building surveying discipline to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s (Banyard et al., (2003). As for swaying the public to support the circumscription of a claimed jurisdiction, the promoters of the building surveying profession acknowledged that the Malaysian public awareness of the significance of building surveying as a profession was still low (Isnin et al., 2016). They admitted that little was done by way of public awareness campaign on how professional building surveyors can protect public interest by addressing building defects, abandoned projects and low building functional utility (Shah Ali and Chen, 2012). Awareness about building survey among other construction professionals was also acknowledged to be low (Ali and Woon, 2013; Rashid and Ishak, 2007; Isnin et al., 2016). As for getting workers at the workplace to gain management's support for their claim, the reality is that there are insufficient graduates working in the field that they were trained for because of limited job openings. Overall, the professional systems model resonates to a certain extent with the empirical findings.

## 7.0 Conclusions

The paper makes two contributions; the first empirical and the second theoretical. Among the empirical findings not mentioned by previous scholars was the intention of the engineers and architects to locate building surveying as auxiliary to their roles, neutral stance of lawmakers over building surveying's affirmation through legislation, active support of universities, meeting of the promoters with the Malaysian Bar Council and concerns of some faculty members over the launching of building surveying as an undergraduate programme. One under-investigated link of past narratives on building surveying in Malaysia is the explanation of why events unfolded in the way they did.

An even greater contribution of the paper is that through the lens of sociological literature, theory-based explanations were generated. It makes the case that professionalisation theory and professional systems model are suited for the subject matter, but not professional power theory. The lens brings into clarity the greatest hurdle to building surveying as a discrete profession in Malaysia, and that is inter-professional conflict. Following the demonstrated explanatory powers of the sociological lens, future studies on professions in the construction industry should also follow suit.

As for the future of building surveying in Malaysia, the pioneers are making way for the younger generation to establish the legitimacy of building surveying as a profession. It is imperative that the latter are aware of their predecessor's past actions so the future course of action that will produce the best outcome can be formulated. To that end, this paper provides an important

source of future reference. One way forward for the new generation is to exploit the disruption in technology, society, institutions and even politics. As an example, in Hong Kong the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (MBIS) launched in June 2012 entrenches registered building surveyors' position as they were among the select professions permitted to carry out prescribed building inspection or supervision of prescribed building repair works under the MBIS. As building stock in Malaysia continues to age, building pathology may become too burdensome and complex for general practitioners to handle, thus paving the way for building surveyors to take over the task. Alternatively, future building surveyors might want to migrate into new specialisations for which no established professions have staked their jurisdiction over. Building surveyors in Australia have shown the way by taking on the job of assessing building proposals for compliance against relevant codes and standards, conducting construction inspections and final inspection prior to occupation, which is far removed from pathology diagnosis and remedial reports that British building surveyors provide.

Elite sampling ensured that only those with authoritative knowledge contributed to the research. The limitation of small sample size was compensated by referral to past publications. The history of building surveyors trying to gain professional acceptance in Malaysia is interesting. Future research should be undertaken so that their progress can continue to be charted as lessons for anyone interested in the study on professions. Other future studies can include applying the same sociological template for analysing the consolidation of building surveying profession in Hong Kong, change in job scope of building surveyors in Australia or even the future of building surveying in the UK.

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